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Important Speech of President Lincoln
to the Virginia Commissioners.

WASHINGTON, April 13, 1861.

The Virginia Commissioners were formally received to-day. They presented the resolutions under which they were appointed. In reply to Messrs. Preston, Stuart and Randolph, the Commissioners, Mr. Lincoln said:

COMMISSE—As a committee of the Virginia Convention, now in session, you present me a preamble and resolution in these words:

Whereas, in the opinion of this Convention, the uncertainty which prevails in the public mind as to the policy which the Federal Executive intends to pursue towards the seceded States, is extremely injurious to the industrial and commercial interests of the country, tends to keep up an excitement which is unfavorable to the adjustment of the pending difficulties, and threatens a disturbance of the public peace; therefore,

Resolved, That a committee of three delegates be appointed to wait on the President of the United States, present to him this preamble, and respectfully ask him to communicate to this Convention the policy which the Federal Executive intends to pursue in regard to the Confederate States.

In answer I have to say that having, at the beginning of my official term, expressed my intended policy as plainly as I was able, it is with deep regret and mortification I now learn there is great and injurious uncertainty in the public mind as to what that policy is, and what course I intend to pursue. Not having as yet seen occasion to change, it is now my purpose to pursue the course marked out in the inaugural address. I commend a careful consideration of the whole document as the best expression I can give to my purpose. As I then said, therein said, I now repeat, "The power conferred on me will be used to hold, occupy and possess property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imports; but beyond what is necessary for these objects there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." By the words "property and places belonging to the government," I chiefly allude to the military posts and property which are in possession of the government when it came into my hands. But if, as now appears to be true, in pursuit of a purpose to drive the United States authority from these places, an unprovoked assault has been made upon Fort Sumter, I shall hold myself at liberty to respond to it, and also the places which had been seized before the government was driven upon me; and in any case I shall, to the end of my ability, repel force by force. In case it proves true that Fort Sumter has been assaulted, as is reported, I shall, perhaps, cause the United States mails to be withdrawn from all the States which claim to have seceded, and that the Government will not permit its mails to be carried by the seceded States.

Deeming that the present condition of public affairs presents an extraordinary occasion, I do hereby, in virtue of the power in me vested by the constitution, convene both Houses of Congress. The Senators and Representatives are therefore summoned to assemble at their respective chambers at twelve o'clock, noon, on Thursday, the fourth day of July next, then and there to consider and determine such measures, as, in their wisdom, the public safety and interest may seem to demand.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this fifteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-fifth.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President—
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

MAP OF CHARLESTON HARBOR:

Showing the Relative Positions of the Entrance, Stono Inlet, Morris and Sullivan Islands, Forts Sumter and Moultrie, Cummings Point Battery and the City.



OUR WASHINGTON DESPATCHES.

WASHINGTON, April 14, 1861.

The answer of the President to the Virginia Commissioners indicates the course of the Lincoln government. There is no longer any doubt that the most active war measures will at once be taken to repulse all the government property at the South. Congress will be at once convened, men and supplies asked for, and the whole power of the government will be exerted to its utmost capacity to maintain its nationality and integrity. No means will be left untaken to inaugurate a war policy of the most gigantic proportions.

In spite of the Sabbath, thick crowds gathered to-day at the street corners, and in front of the several hotels, and kept up a continued and excited discussion of the events in Charleston harbor.

About noon it became generally known that the President had a proclamation ready for promulgation, calling upon the several States for seventy-five thousand men. The feeling of oppression under which the Unionists labored ever since Friday disappeared at once. Faces lighted up, and loud expressions of gratification were heard in every direction.

The proclamation also convenes Congress on the Fourth of July.

The Attorney General has decided that the President has authority, under existing circumstances, to call upon the States for troops without the special authority of Congress. A special session of Congress may be called for other purposes nevertheless.

The announcement was received as an earnest of the intention of the administration to prosecute the war opened by the South Carolina secessionists with the utmost vigor, and never stop until the revolution was fairly crushed out, and greeted as such with the liveliest satisfaction by men of all parties. That the North will be an unit in the support of whatever measures the government will now take, for the re-establishment and maintenance of its authority in the seceded States, is plainly shown in the unanimity of sentiment prevailing on this question among the democratic, republican and American leaders now here.

A proclamation, declaring Washington under martial law, is expected to be issued to-morrow.

The requisitions upon the Governors of the several States will be issued and sent forward to-morrow.

The quota of troops asked for from Pennsylvania is about thirteen thousand, New York the same number, and Massachusetts about two thousand, Maryland three thousand, and the other States in proportion. The government will accept more than the number asked for from each State if offered. There is no doubt, from present indications, that most of the States will tender more troops than the government want.

The War Department has been busy to-day in the preparation of the details to be communicated to the State authorities.

Efforts are still making to concentrate a formidable military force in and around Washington, to be prepared for all emergencies.

An additional number of federal troops arrived to-day by special train.

Ten thousand volunteers from Pennsylvania and New York will be concentrated here in the course of the present week.

Fifteen hundred men are now under arms, guarding the public buildings and every approach to the capital.

Governor Dennison, from Ohio, telegraphed last night, offering ten thousand men to the President for immediate service.

Senator Sherman, and a number of other prominent Northern men, returned home this afternoon, to assist in the organization of the militia in their several States.

Governor Curtin, of Pennsylvania, was engaged all day with Secretary Cameron, making arrangements for the immediate transfer of several Pennsylvania regiments to the capital.

Two officers of the New York city militia to-day announced to the President the readiness of their regiments to respond to his call.

Captain Newton, of Boston, acting commander of the second battalion Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, a very efficient corps, tendered his services and his battalion to the President yesterday.

General Lane, the newly elected Kansas Senator, speaks of resigning and returning to Kansas to raise a regiment.

General Robinson, one of the oldest citizens of Pittsburgh, came here yesterday, ready to volunteer.

The President had repeated and protracted consultations with the members of the Cabinet to-day. He is calm and composed, but determined to put down Southern revolution at any cost.

The military guard at the general public departments was largely increased last night.

The war feeling is up among the Union men of the country now here, and the city is full of Northern, Western and Middle States people.

A large number of military men have left for different parts of the North, for the purpose of raising regiments. Col. Edwards goes immediately to Illinois for that purpose.

Arrangements will be immediately made for the construction of the seven steam scoops of war provided for at the last session of Congress.

The government is active in every department in preparing for the most vigorous execution of the laws.

Three cavalry companies from Texas, and Sherman's light battery of artillery, are expected here to-morrow.

Additional volunteer companies will be mustered in to-morrow.

Five officers of the navy yesterday tendered to the Navy Department their resignations, which were refused. Their names will probably be stricken from the list as dismissed, as in the recent cases of several officers of the army under similar circumstances.

The National Volunteers last night passed a resolution severely denouncing the military operations of the government, and expressing sympathy with the secessionists. It is said these volunteers are several hundred strong.

The news from Charleston to-day is quite encouraging to the friends of the administration. If the despatches can be believed, it appears that Major Anderson did not surrender the fort last night and proceed under escort to Morris Island. On the contrary, a flag of truce from the fort lying outside the bar was sent to Morris Island, inquiring if the revolutionists would consent to allow Major Anderson to evacuate in a vessel of the fleet. They agreed to cease hostilities until nine o'clock to-day, to consider the proposition, and by despatches from Charleston to-day noon, General Beauregard notified the Commodore of the fleet that they would not object to the evacuation of Sumter by Major Anderson in the manner indicated by the commander of the United States forces.

Accordingly it is asserted that Major Anderson will embark in the steamer Isabel for New York this afternoon.

The government is at a loss to understand the failure of the relief fleet to make a demonstration. Official advice is anxiously looked for, as alone apt to solve the mystery.

The failure of the expeditions despatched to Charleston has convinced the administration that the views expressed by General Scott, in regard to the number of soldiers required to reinforce Fort Sumter, were correct. They will, in all probability, hereafter follow his advice, instead of that of inexperienced men.

It is denied, positively and emphatically, that any overture was ever made to the South Carolina authorities to evacuate Fort Sumter and leave a corporal's guard and flag. No such proposition was ever made. If made it would have been accepted. On the contrary, they assert that, while the administration were daily assuring the world of their intention to abandon it, orders were sent to Major Anderson to strengthen the defenses and maintain it until the expedition for succor arrived. Personal feelings, it is said, are in writing, that Fort Sumter was to be abandoned, while the writers were preparing an argument to hold it.

It was the bad faith of the administration and the utter lack of courage of truth, they assert, that stimulated the government at Montgomery to order its reduction before the arrival of the succoring squadron and the landing of troops. The administration emphatically deny that such is the fact. Mr. Lincoln asserts that neither himself nor any of his administration gave them any such assurance. The administration held that it was dealing with traitors, and did not propose to disclose its policy.

Official advice from Montgomery, received to-day, indicate a most vigorous policy on the part of the Confederate government. They are greatly elated at their triumphant success at Fort Sumter, and vast preparations have been made, and are making, for defensive and offensive hostilities. A high functionary of that government, in a despatch to a friend in this city, says the Confederate Congress will declare war so soon as it assembles, but in act will discriminate between alien friends and alien enemies. In the former class are included the border slave States, and all at the North who oppose the policy of the Lincoln government. These, they assert, will be exempt from all the penalties of war. Over twenty thousand volunteers, he says, are enrolled at Montgomery from the border States, ready to march at a minute's notice. This number will be multiplied almost indefinitely if required. Five high regiments from the North, they state, have tendered their services, and will be accepted.

There is the greatest anxiety everywhere to hear further news from the South. Groups discuss the war news and its future effects on the country.

Mrs. Doubleday, the spirited wife of Captain Doubleday, is here.

WASHINGTON, April 14, 1861.

Information continues to be received from private sources of secret plots in various localities in Maryland and Virginia, having in view the seizure of the public property and even persons, the highest officers of the government. Though these accounts are not generally credited, they are believed in official quarters, and hence the precautionary movements. At all events, they are considered necessary, no one knowing what turn events may take during the prevalent excitement.

Information from what are deemed reliable sources was received last night, to the effect that the secessionists of Delaware, whose headquarters are reported to be in Virginia, were about to make a sudden attack upon Fort Delaware, opposite Delaware City, for which they were preparing last night. Immediate steps were taken by the Secretary of War to prevent the consummation of the plot.

The Virginia Commissioners returned to Richmond to-day. They were cautious in expressing their opinions relative to the President's reply.

Senator Douglas called on the President to-night. He had an interesting conversation on the present condition of the country. The substance of it was, on the part of Mr. Douglas, that while he was unalterably opposed to the administration on all its political issues, he was prepared to maintain the President in the exercise of all his constitutional functions to preserve the Union, maintain the government, and defend the federal capital. A firm policy, and prompt action were necessary. The capital of our country was in danger, and must be protected at all hazards, at any expense of men and money. He spoke of the present and future without reference to the past.

The interview of Judge Douglas with the President was not only exceedingly gratifying to both, but is the subject of much rejoicing by the friends of Mr. Douglas here.

Colonel Elsworth intends to raise a regiment of picked men in Illinois, who will be armed with an improved rifle and sabre, and uniformed and equipped for the Zouave drill. Every company will have one or more commissioned and non-commissioned officers thoroughly competent to teach the Zouave drill, and the regiment will be hurried through with all possible despatch. Colonel Elsworth has special instructions from the government with regard to the matter.

THE SURRENDER OF SUMTER.

Interesting Additional Details of the Bombardment at Charleston—Arrangements for the Departure of Major Anderson and his Troops.

CHARLESTON, April 13—Evening.

Major Anderson has surrendered, after hard fighting, commencing at half-past four o'clock yesterday morning, and continuing until five minutes to one to-day.

The American flag has given place to the palmetto of South Carolina.

You have received my previous despatches concerning the fire and the shooting away of the flagstaff. The latter event is due to Fort Moultrie, as well as the burning of the fort, which resulted from one of the hot shots fired in the morning.

During the conflagration General Beauregard sent a boat to Major Anderson, with offers of assistance, the bearers being Colonels W. F. Miles and Roger Pryor, of Virginia, and Lee. But before it reached him a flag of truce had been raised. Another boat then put off, containing ex-Governor Manning, Major D. R. Jones and Colonel Charles Allison, to arrange the terms of surrender. These were the same as those offered on the 11th inst. These were offered. They stated that all proper facilities would be afforded for the removal of Major Anderson and his command, together with the company arms and property, and all private property, to any point in the United States he might elect. The terms were not, therefore, unconditional.

Major Anderson stated that he surrendered his sword to General Beauregard as the representative of the Confederate government. General Beauregard said he would not receive it from so brave a man. He says Major Anderson made a staunch fight, and elevated himself in the estimation of every true Carolinian.

During the fight, when Major Anderson's flagstaff was shot away, a boat put off from Morris Island, carrying another American flag for him to fight under—a noteworthy instance of the honor and chivalry of the South Carolina seceders, and their admiration for a brave man taking on Governor Manning. Major D. R. Jones and Colonel Charles Allison, to arrange the terms of surrender. These were the same as those offered on the 11th inst. These were offered. They stated that all proper facilities would be afforded for the removal of Major Anderson and his command, together with the company arms and property, and all private property, to any point in the United States he might elect. The terms were not, therefore, unconditional.

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Six vessels are reported of the bar, but the utmost indignation is expressed against them for not coming to the assistance of Major Anderson when he made signals of distress.

The soldiers on Morris Island jumped on the guns every shot they received from Fort Sumter, while thousands cheered for the fleet.

Colonel Lucas, of the Governor's staff, has just returned from Fort Sumter, and says Major Anderson told him he had pleasant recollections of Fort Moultrie than Fort Sumter. Only five men were wounded, one seriously.

The flames have destroyed everything. Both officers and soldiers were obliged to lay on their faces in the caemeteries to prevent suffocation.

The explosions heard in the city were from small piles of shell, which ignited from the heat.

The effect of the shot upon the fort was tremendous. The walls were battered in hundreds of places, but no breach was made.

Major Anderson expresses himself much pleased that no lives had been sacrificed, and says that to Providence alone is to be attributed the bloodless victory. He commends the firing of the Carolinians, and the large number of exploded shells lying around attest their effectiveness.

The number of soldiers in the fort was about seventy, besides twenty-five workmen, who assisted at the guns. His stock of provisions was almost exhausted, however. He would have been starved out in two more days.

The entrance to the fort is mined, and the officers were told to be careful, even after the surrender, on account of the heat, lest it should explode.

A boat from the squadron, with a flag of truce, has arrived at Morris Island, bearing a request to be allowed to come and take Major Anderson and his forces. An answer will be given to-morrow at nine o'clock.

The public feeling against the fleet is very strong, it being regarded as cowardly to make not even an attempt to aid a fellow officer.

Had the surrender not taken place, Fort Sumter would have been stormed to-night. The men are crazy for a fight.

The bells have been chiming all day, guns firing, ladies waving handkerchiefs, people cheering, and citizens making themselves generally demonstrative. It is regarded as the greatest day in the history of South Carolina.

CHARLESTON, April 14, 1861.

The last act in the drama of Fort Sumter has been concluded. Major Anderson has evacuated, and, with his command, departed by the steamer Isabel from the harbor. He saluted his flag, and the company, then forming on the parade ground, marched out upon the wharf, with drum and fire playing "Yankee Doodle."

During the salute a pile of cartridges burst in one of the caemeteries, killing two men and wounding four others. One was buried in the fort with military honors. The other will be buried by the soldiers of South Carolina.

The wounded men were brought to the city, where they are receiving the best surgical attention. The others went in the steamer.

It is not definitely known whether Major Anderson will go to New York in the Isabel, or in a man-of-war; but it is supposed the former, as he is said to be highly incensed against the United States officers for not coming to his assistance during the fire, in response to frequent signals of distress.

The Isabel was furnished him at his own request.

The people are equally indignant here, and say it is the most cowardly act ever perpetrated. They might have even made the attempt to aid him.

In contrast with this, an old slave passed through the hottest fire, with a sloop load of wood, on Friday evening, and came safely to the city. Somebody told him he would be killed in the attempt. "Can't help dat," said he; "must go to do down to-night. If anybody hurt de chile or de boat, massa see him about it, ashoo."

His sloop received four shots.

It is reported here that Major Anderson sent in his resignation, to take effect on the inauguration of the Lincoln government, but no notice was taken of it.

The news received from Washington to-night, states that Major Anderson strongly expected treachery. The idea is preposterous.

The fort is burned into a mere shell; not a particle of woodwork can be found. The guns on one side of the parapet are entirely dismounted, others split, while the gun carriages are knocked into splinters.

Major Anderson says the accuracy of the firing surprised him, and that if he had had two hundred more men, one half would have been killed for want of suitable protection.

When Colonel Chesnut, aid of General Beauregard, went to offer assistance, after the fire, he says the fort was like an oven, and he could hardly breathe. It was so hot that Major Anderson received him in one of the caemeteries. Inquiry being made how many were killed, he said, "None." "How many on your side?" "None," was the response. "Thank God," replied Major Anderson, "there has been a higher power over us."

Major Anderson says it is preposterous to fight such a people. One of the officers in the fort remarked that they had endeavored not to fire on exposed individuals. "Yes," said Major Anderson, "I gave orders not to sight men, but to silence batteries."

Both men and officers were begrimed with smoke and powder.

The batteries which have done the most mischief are the Dahlgren battery, Stevens battery, and the rifle cannon.

The fort was set on fire three times with hot shot on Friday, but was extinguished. On Saturday it was again in flames, and then beyond control. After the fire ceased, the Surgeon General of the State troops went down and offered his personal services to aid the wounded.

As regards harbor defence, the fort is just as good as ever. The caemeteries are perfect, the guns there in prime condition, and bear on both sides.

Major Anderson was obliged to throw overboard a large quantity of powder to prevent explosion, and it was floating around the fort to-day.

One of the aids carried brandy to Major Anderson in a boat, after the fire, and the latter said it was very acceptable, as the men were completely exhausted by their labors. I mention this to show the kind and chivalrous relations between the officers.

Before going into action Major Anderson sent word by an aid of General Beauregard to the governor, thanking him for kind attentions during the past two months, and very solemnly said, "Farewell, gentlemen. If we do not meet again here, I hope we shall meet in a better world."

Just before the demand for the evacuation he received a letter from his wife, informing him of the health reports that the demand would be made. He was much surprised, but more so when the fact was verified three minutes afterwards.

The fort has been garrisoned by the Palmetto Guards, and put under command of Lieut. Colonel Ripley, who commanded Fort Moultrie after the departure of Major Anderson.

The Major's feelings were spared in every respect, and no person, except authorized aids, allowed inside. The harbor is full of boats sailing around the fort. But no parties without business are permitted to land.

Special despatches to-night state that Mr. Lincoln has called for seventy-five thousand volunteers. The people think there is a great deal of bluff about it.

The city is resuming its usual quiet. Everybody is exchanging congratulations over the successful termination of the fight, but the soldiers are itching for a hand to hand battle.

The Confederate flag and the Palmetto flag were hoisted on separate spars simultaneously.

It is believed that a blockade has been finally established.

LATER.

The fire has broken out afresh in the ruins of the fort. Two engines have gone down to operate, and if necessary flood the magazine.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

CHARLESTON, April 13—P. M.

Hostilities have for the present ceased, and the victory belongs to South Carolina. With the display of the flag of truce on the ramparts of Sumter at half past one o'clock the firing ceased, and an unconditional surrender was made.

The Carolinians had no idea that the fight was at an end so soon.

After the flagstaff of Anderson was shot away, Col. Wigfall, aid of General Beauregard, at his commander's request, went to Sumter with a white flag to offer assistance in extinguishing the flames. He approached the burning fortress from Morris Island, and while the firing was raging on all sides, effected a landing at Sumter. He approached a port-hole, and was met by Major Anderson. The commandant of Fort Sumter said he had just displayed a white flag, but the flag from the Carolina batteries was kept up nevertheless.

Colonel Wigfall replied that Major Anderson must hand down the American flag; that no parity would be granted. Surrender or fight was the word.

Major Anderson then hoisted down his flag and displayed only that of truce.

All firing instantly ceased, and two other of General Beauregard's staff—ex-Senator Chesnut and ex-Governor Manning—came over in a boat and stipulated with the Major that his surrender should be unconditional for the present, subject to the terms of General Beauregard.

Major Anderson was allowed to remain with his men.

CONTINUED ON EIGHTH PAGE.